

(Mount Clipping in Space Below)

He's 'Stickler For the Law'

Criminal Court Judge W. Preston Battle, one of the most experienced trial judges in Memphis, was announced today as the judge in the trial of James Earl Ray for the slaying of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.

A short, heavyset man who runs a no-nonsense courtroom, Battle has been trial judge for a number of major cases since he first took the bench in 1959. He presided at both trials of Louis F. Montesi, grocery executive convicted of killing his wife.

Battle's decisions have been reversed several times, including the first Montesi trial, but lawyers say this is the mark of a judge who hears a lot of cases and isn't afraid to blaze new trails.

Serious, almost scowling, on the bench, the 60-year-old

judge is a stickler for legal aspects of a case and often recesses court to check a point of law.

Lawyers who try grandstand tactics in the courtroom are likely to draw sharp words from the judge, but he displays exceptional patience with defendants or witnesses who appear nervous or seem not to understand legal procedures.

A lifelong Memphian, Judge Battle attended Washington & Lee University and the University of Memphis Law School, now part of Memphis State University School of Law.

ONCE SHY

He has said in the past that his shyness and timidity in his younger days led indirectly to his law career, that he had an aversion to speaking in public and joined the literary society at Memphis University School to overcome it.

After receiving his license to practice law in 1933, he became assistant district attorney general for Shelby County, a post he held for 11 years, serving on the staffs of Atty. Gens. W. T. McLain, Marion Boyd and Will Gerber.

In 1945 he entered private law practice in Memphis, with the majority of his cases devoted to criminal law. In 1959 he was appointed judge for Division III of the Criminal Court of Shelby County, a newly created court, and has since been elected to the bench.

BAR LEADER

A member of the Memphis and Shelby County Bar Association, he has served on the board of directors and executive committee. He has served as president of the Memphis and Shelby County Mental Health Association, has been active in adult education classes at Southwestern and goes deep sea fishing for a hobby.

Married in 1941 to the former Florence Warfield Boyce of Memphis, he has four children, Mrs. E. Frank King, W. J. Britton III, Mrs. E. R. Kinnebrew III, and W. Preston Battle Jr.

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JUDGE W. PRESTON BATTLE
To Preside in Ray Trial